

Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7430

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, BC

SUBJECT: KHAMA CONTINUES TOUGH LINE ON POLITIZATION OF LABOR MOVEMENT

REF: A) GABORONE 1016; B) GABORONE 1755

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT KHAMA'S DECEMBER 19 SPEECH TO WORKERS AT SELEBI-PIKWE CONTINUED THE TOUGH LINE WITH WHICH HE HAD RESPONDED TO THE JULY STRIKE (REF A). HE CRITICIZED THE UNION, POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND WORKERS AND GAVE COMPANY MANAGEMENT A SLAP ON THE WRIST. KHAMA WARNED THAT THE GOB WILL NOT TOLERATE UNREST FOR POLITICAL MOTIVES. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT KHAMA ADDRESSED WORKERS AT THE SELEBI-PIKWE COPPER/NICKEL COMPLEX ON DECEMBER 19, EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR "INDUSTRIAL PEACE AND POLITICAL STABILITY" IF BOTSWANA'S ECONOMY IS TO DEVELOP. KHAMA REMINDED HIS AUDIENCE THAT THE LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY BORROWED BY THE GOB (R60 MILLION) TO BUILD THE SELEBI-PIKWE COMPLEX MUST BE REPAID AND THAT BOTSWANA MUST MAINTAIN "ITS REPUTATION AS A STABLE AND SAFE COUNTRY" IF IT IS TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT AND RETAIN SKILLED EXPATRIATE MANPOWER. HE URGED THOSE WHO ARE EMPLOYED AT SELEBI-PIKWE TO MAKE WAGE SACRIFICES IN

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ORDER TO CREATE JOBS FOR MORE BOTSWANA AND ASKED THE AUDIENCE

TO REMEMBER THAT THEIR "RIOTOUS RAMPAGE" IN JULY OF THIS YEAR COULD HAVE "DESTROYED THE SMELTER," THUS CAUSING THE LOSS OF JOBS AND RUINING BOTSWANA'S "ECONOMIC PROSPECTS."

3. KHAMA, WHO CLAIMED HE IS NOT "ANTI-UNION," CAME DOWN HARD ON LABOR AND ON THE BOTSWANA MINE WORKERS UNION (BMWU) IN PARTICULAR. HE EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT TRADE UNIONISM IN BOTSWANA IS "DEGENERATING INTO A PARALLEL POLITICAL MOVEMENT" AIMED AT CAUSING DISORDER BY EXPLOITING LABOR GRIEVANCES TO ADVANCE "POLITICAL AMBITIONS IN COLLUSION WITH KNOWN POLITICAL SUBVERSIVES AND SOCIAL MISFITS." ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT, THE BMWU WAS SO ENMESHED IN POLITICS THAT IT FAILED "DISMALLY TO PROVIDE THE VITAL LINK BETWEEN WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT" BEFORE THE JULY STRIKE.

4. IN ADDITION TO HIS REFERENCE TO "KNOWN POLITICAL SUBVERSIVES," KHAMA DIRECTLY ATTACKED THE OPPOSITION PARTIES' "IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNFOUNDED STATEMENTS" ON EXPATRIATE SALARIES AS "A CLEAR INDICATION OF THE LEVEL TO WHICH (THEY) ARE PREPARED TO SINK IN PURSUIT OF THEIR SELFISH POLITICAL OBJECTIVES." HE WARNED THAT "GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO COUNTENANCE THE INTRUSION OF POLITICS IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND WILL PROTECT BOTSWANA AGAINST "POLITICAL ELEMENTS" WHO POLITICALLY MANIPULATE WORKERS.

5. HE INFORMED THE BAMANGWATO CONCESSIONS LIMITED (BCL) MANAGEMENT THAT THEY HAVE "MISCONSTRUED" HIS INTENT IF THEY REGARDED HIS JULY SPEECH AS "A ONCE IN A LIFE-TIME" CHANCE FOR AN OVERALL PURGE" PURGE AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT, IN THE FUTURE, GOB POLICY WILL BE "TAKEN FOR WHAT IT IS." KHAMA VOICED ANNOYANCE WITH BCL FOR CREATING IMPRESSION AMONG WORKERS THAT GOB ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HOLDING DOWN WAGES WHILE "THE COMPANY IS PREPARED TO REACH FOR THE SKY." HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE SELEBI-PIKWE RACIAL SITUATION IS LESS THAN IDEAL AND URGED BOTH BCL AND BOTSWANA TO BE TOLERANT.

6. KHAMA CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT THE GOB "CANNOT TOLERATE LAWLESSNESS" AND WILL MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER. THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF "RESPONSIBLE" TRADE UNIONISM, BUT "NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF INDUSTRIAL PEACE AND STABILITY." AS HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DID IN HIS TIGHT SPEECH IN JULY, HE REMINDED INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL AGITATORS THAT HIS "PATIENCE IS NOT INEXHAUSTIBLE."

7. COMMENT: KHAMA'S SPEECH WAS MUCH TOUGHER THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED BY SOME OBSERVERS (REF B). HE CLEARLY REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE GOB'S INCOMES POLICY WHICH HOLDS DOWN WAGES IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE EMPLOYMENT, DISCOURAGE RURAL POPULATION MOVEMENTS TO URBAN AREAS AND ATTRACT FOREIGN

INVESTMENT. KHAMA'S ADDRESS PUTS WORKERS, POLITICAL OPPOSITION
AND THE BMWU ON NOTICE THAT HE WILL BROOK NO POLITIZATION OF
THE LABOR MOVEMENT WHICH MIGHT FRIGHTEN OFF SUCH INVESTMENT.
THE FULL TEXT OF SPEECH WILL BE FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM.
THOMSEN

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